



Plantout Success



Plantout 2007 will surely be remembered as one of the best ever.

Congratulations to the organising committee and Jallukar Landcare Group for all their hard work and thorough planning. It is a huge achievement to organise an event which is both enjoyable and worthwhile and at the same time gets people to work hard for

fun!

By lunchtime on Sunday over 20 000 trees were in the ground and guarded, by far the most ever achieved at a Plantout.

The weather was perfect, the planting sites varied and well prepared, the evening meal and entertainment thoroughly enjoyable.

You will find a selection of

photos on the centre pages of this newsletter showing some of the plantout action.

Also in this issue: an unusual view of the Project Platypus Manager's role from Luke, some profound thoughts from Bernie, notice of the upcoming AGM, reports on past events and news of new projects and more.

Phil Williams, Editor.



Fauna on Farms

A series of radio advertisements, interviews and articles on the Project Platypus Fauna on Farms workshop ensured we had a good turn up at Concongella Hall on the 30th May.



Field visit at Holdens'

A panel of excellent speakers didn't disappoint the audience of fifty people from around the region. All interests were catered for with presentations on small mammals, reptiles, insects and birds. Whilst identification of local species was covered, the broader issues of loss of species, what constitutes good habitat and trends in fauna populations were a part of the discussion.

With the assistance of students from Skene Street School we catered for lunch and in the afternoon headed out for a site visit to check out the biodiversity on a remnant patch of Ironbarks on the Holden's Concongella farm.

George and Sue Holden explained the rationale for fencing off their remnant Ironbark hill and we were able to see the diversity in the grassy ground flora and understorey shrubs, some planted and some naturally regenerated. Some interesting birds were seen including the attractive Orange-winged Sitella.

Our reptile expert Garry Peterson from DSE in Warrnambool was able to find a Little Whip Snake in the remnant.

At our next biodiversity workshop we hope to engage more of the farming community and perhaps address issues such as Kangaroo populations and feral animal control. If you have any ideas on topics or speakers for a forum next year let PP know.



Little Whip Snake

Search Still On for Shed

For several years Project Platypus has been fortunate to have the use of rooms at the old Tech school site to store our tools and equipment and as a base for workshops etc. With the redevelopment of the Skene St School the old buildings are due be demolished in September. We are looking for a shed/yard in Stawell to house our trailers and fencing and planting equipment. As Project Platypus funding is linked to specific projects, we do not have any surplus for renting more premises, so we are looking at a minimal or no rental. If anyone can help please phone Luke at the Project Platypus office 5358 4410.

2007/2008 Revegetation Program Begins NOW

- Want to protect some habitat?
- Want to construct shelter belts?
- Want to contribute to a biolink?
- Want to enhance some existing vegetation?
- Got salinity you want to control?

Now is the time to start planning your planting for next year
Please contact Bernie to arrange a property inspection
0427 881 021

Landcare : What does it mean to you?

I think parts of the following scenario will be familiar to readers, particularly blokes. Ingrid, Lucinda and I were at a send off for my nephew who was heading overseas. Ingrid and Lucinda decided it was time to go home but I decided to stay a bit longer (familiar?). As others left I began to wonder about how I would get home - a distance of five km by road but only about two km as the crow flies. Not wanting to ask anyone to drive me home I decided to head off on foot



across the paddocks, stubbie in hand, beautiful moonlit night and just after midnight. What started out as an expedient way to get home turned into a Landcare experience. My first observation was how difficult the fences of today are to climb. All the fences I climbed over were new, seven line ringlock with a plain wire on top. Being a moonlit night, my next observation was how few trees some paddocks had in them and I thought about what could be done

to improve this situation. Next to enter my thoughts was the lack of grass and how much money and work it would take to restore the pasture once the drought breaks. I

then came across a waterway that I thought would really be better off if it was fenced out, as much for stock management as for the environmental benefits.

I finished my stubbie about 2/3rds of the way home. In my younger years I would just have piffed the can into the bush, but

imbued with my Landcare ethic I carried my stubbie home. Finally I left the paddocks and back on the roadside I caught my shirt on a Briar Rose and cursed that this invasive weed hadn't been sprayed.

On reflection of my moonlight walk home, I realized that it doesn't matter where you are, what you are doing, what time it is there is always room for Landcare based thinking in our lives.

Bernie Rudolph

Project Platypus AGM

The Project Platypus 2007 AGM will be held on Monday 3rd September at the Stawell Tennis Club.

We will be providing finger food and the bar will be open from 7.00pm with the meeting starting at 7.30.

Last year instead of a guest speaker we decided on a more interactive presentation and a panel of locals debated whether Landcare Is Dying. Some used props to emphasise their case and we managed to have fun and highlight some serious issues.

This year we are going for a presentation with a difference! Luke will use a variety of props and "volunteers" to give a light hearted but informative talk on our icon species *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*.

The main business of the night will be the election of the Management Committee. Our aim is to have all landcare groups represented, so we are calling for nominations either in writing beforehand or in person on the night. All positions will be declared vacant, so nominations are called for:

- a) Office bearers (chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer) and
- b) six committee members.

It would be ideal if the new committee could consist of a balance between experienced existing members and enthusiastic new ones!

The committee is endeavouring to bring new blood to the committee by the retirement of 2 or 3 members each year. It would be great to have some women members on the committee.

TABLE OF COMPLETED PROJECTS

2007

TOTAL LENGTH OF FENCING	38,240m
TOTAL AREA REVEGETAED/ENHANCED	164.9ha
TOTAL NUMBER OF PLANTS	36,400
TOTAL LENGTH OF DIRECT SEEDING	23.6km
TOTAL WATERWAY RESTORED/PROTECTED	5950m

Plantout 2007



Saturday - Registration



Too many treeguards is never enough



Planting at Rod Marshall's



Edith Thomas and 2 out of 20 200 trees



The non dancing party



***This** is how you do it!*



Briefing time



Bring in the experts!



The band warms up



How many more can I get in?



Start them young!



Trees by the bucketful



Getting down and dirty



Pottiputki experts



The long walk home



Ready for drink and a sit down



The view's not bad either



20 000 trees need 20 000 guards

Lycosa lapidosa

Seven months with Project Platypus: eight committee meetings, seventeen sub-committee meetings, six Landcare meetings and my first Plantout down. I am almost over the “Who are you?” questions and have progressed to : “How am I finding Project Platypus?”.

My first thoughts often extend back to an observational experiment I was involved in with Wolf Spiders, *Lycosa lapidosa*. These fascinating little arachnids have the ability to consume one prey whilst using their other seven arms to capture subsequent prey: ‘Multiple Prey-Feeding’.

They were also witnessed stunning a prey item, dropping it, moving on feeding, then returning later to feed on the initial prey.

I often wish I had another 6 arms!

Multiple Prey-Feeding is a good way to sum up Project Platypus as an organisation and more directly an excellent description of the Managers role. Project Platypus as an organisation is growing, developing, evolving. Gone are the days of a handful of volunteers scratching for funding, gone are the days of a Manager working on their own on one or two projects. Project Platypus now has its own office, meeting room, computers, cameras, three vehicles, direct seeder, spray trailer, water tank and a vast array of planting equipment. It employs two full time and five part time staff and attracts over \$500,000 a year in funding. At any one time we may be assisting in over thirty projects. This very newsletter will be circulated to

over 800 people. Therefore as the Manager I am often feeling like a Wolf Spider.

‘Excellent time-management skills and the ability to multi-task’, was what I think the position description read. If I was to advertise my position I think I would prefer ‘Strategic multi-prey feeding ability required’.

This would be followed up by: ‘The ability to work with a multi-prey feeding community, supported by multi-prey feeding staff’.

Project Platypus is a community group. It is run by a ten person Management Committee and has four different sub-committees which are all driven by Landcare-conscious community members. Some people have been involved in Project Platypus since its

inception, some are more recent inductees. Some people are actively involved in committees, others assist on a casual basis.

People from all Landcare groups in the upper Wimmera contribute in many different ways to the success of the organisation. Amazing, passionate people who are the heart of the organisation. With many helpers and many arms, Project Platypus has developed into the success story that it is: a multi-prey feeding community, with the assistance of multi-prey feeding staff.

Wolf Spiders preferred habitat is stream-side gravel beds, hilly grasslands and moist woodland. If Project Platypus is ever looking for a change in identity maybe Project Wolf Spider should be first choice on the preference list.

Luke Scott



Schools Environment Network

Project Platypus is represented on a Stawell and district **Schools Environmental Education Network**.

The aim of the group is to promote and facilitate environmental education in our local schools. There are teacher representatives and agencies such as GWM Water and the WCMA who are involved in the environmental field. The first major project is to organize a **Stawell Envirofest**, where Grade 3 and 4 students will be invited to a central place to undertake a series of environmental activities presented by the various agencies. Teachers will be given a series of activities that could be undertaken as follow up to the day.

If anyone is interested in the Network, phone Jane at the Project Platypus office: 5358 4410

Protect Your Paddock Trees

Paddock Trees form a vital part of the Australian landscape. They stabilise our soils, reduce salinity, provide shelter and food for wildlife, provide shelter for stock, sequester carbon from the atmosphere and form an integral part of our rural aesthetics. Unfortunately paddock trees are rapidly diminishing in



A Yellow Gum at Holdens' Property
Concongella

numbers. They are either dying from an array of reasons including drought, parasites, soil compaction and bushfire or being removed for agriculture.

For some time now Project Platypus has been talking about work on the protection of paddock trees and the establishment of new ones to replace those dying or lost in bushfires. A lot of work and research has been carried out on the importance of paddock trees and on their diminishing numbers. However, very little has been done

on the practical aspect of trying to establish cost-efficient ways of protecting old trees and establishing new ones.

Project Platypus has been fortunate to receive funding from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to undertake a Paddock Tree Protection Project. The project involves educating the Upper Wimmera community on the importance of paddock trees; the protection and replanting of these trees.

Over the three year period there will be trials of innovative methods of protection and establishment, followed by monitoring and analysing of these and determining best practice methods. We are also keen to find out what what methods already exist. If you have successfully protected or established paddock trees on your property let Project Platypus know so we can share ideas.

This project will ensure the protection of paddock trees will continue well into the future and become an integral part of natural resource management activities in the Upper Wimmera.

The first phase of this project will be to promote the protection of existing old mature paddock trees, such as the one pictured. As an incentive to landowners Project Platypus, with the assistance of the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust will be offering up to \$100 per tree which is

protected. Please contact Luke or Bernie for more details.

As part of the project we would also love to have a display of photos of significant paddock trees, illustrating their values to our landscape. If you have a "beauty" in your paddock, take a photo and send or email it into us with details of the species and the locality.



Project Platypus Website

In a month or so Project Platypus will at last have a website that is worth going to! With the aid of a grant from the Myer Foundation we will be able to engage a web designer to present all our fantastic photos and information in a stimulating and informative way. Looking through the Project Platypus archives to select photos for the website is an amazing journey and the many "people" photos reflect an organization with extensive community involvement and Landcare achievements.



10th Wimmera Biodiversity Seminar

Each year an outstanding array of speakers is engaged for this annual seminar to give Wimmera landholders the opportunity to delve deeper into the more scientific aspects of our flora and fauna.

The seminar is on **Thursday 6th September at Longerenong College**. This year the subject of Bulokes will feature in the presentations and in the afternoon there is a tour of an outstanding Buloke remnant.

There is a seminar dinner and the after dinner speaker is Dr Val Plumwood from ANU speaking on environmental philosophy.

Registrations forms are available at the PP office or by phoning the Wimmera Catchment Authority on 5382 1544.

PROTECT YOUR PADDOCK TREE



\$100

Conditions apply, please discuss
with Luke 0407 320 093 or
Bernie 0427 881 021

DPI ANNOUNCEMENT

Looking at Pastures

Calling all graziers in the Stawell Ararat area.

A newly formed group of local graziers calling themselves

'Perennial Pastures Systems'

will be meeting

Tuesday 4th September in the afternoon to have a look at recently established pastures, update those interested in pastures on their planned activities and then a BBQ dinner.

Dont miss this exciting opportunity to share in new developments in perennial pasture establishment and management in our area.

For further details contact

Tony Roberts 53 548 481

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